

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AU, IT

SUBJECT: SOUTH TYROLEAN ISSUE RAISED ANEW

1. ITALIAN SENATOR PETER BRUGGER FROM SOUTH TYROL REPEATED TO AUSTRIAN PAPERS AND AUSTRIAN TV LAST WEEK STATEMENTS HE HAD MADE EARLIER TO ITALIAN PAPER THAT SOUTH TYROLEANS SHOULD USE THEIR RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION TO JOIN AUSTRIA AS TENTH PROVINCE IN CASE COMMUNISTS CAME TO POWER IN ITALY. STATEMENT TOOK ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE WHEN POPULAR PEOPLE'S PARTY GOVERNOR OF AUSTRIAN PROVINCE OF TYROL, EDUARD WALLNOEFER, TOLD PRESS HE TOO WOULD DEMAND RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION FOR SOUTH TYROLEANS UNDER CIRCUMSTANCE BRUGGER NOTED AND, IN FACT, HAD ALREADY BEEN CONSIDERING JUDICIAL POSSIBILITIES OF REFERENDUM BEFORE BRUGGER SPOKE. STATEMENTS HAVE RAISED SECOND POTENTIALLY POTENT ETHNIC ISSUE ON EVE OF NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN FOR AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT JUST AS OTHER ONE SEEMS ON WAY TO BEING DEFUSED BY AGREEMENT OF JULY 19 TO RETURN TO YUGOSLAV CULTURAL TREASURES PILFERED BY NAZIS AND BY EXERCISE OF GREATER RESTRAINT BY BOTH YUGOSLAVS AND AUSTRIANS IN OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON RIGHTS AND TREATMENT OF AUSTRIA'S SLOVENE MINORITY. RESURRECTION OF OLD PROBLEM IN AUSTRIA-ITALY RELATIONS COULD RESULT.

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2. REMARKS OF BOTH MEN WERE UNIVERSALLY CHARACTERIZED AS "UNTIMELY" BY VIENNA PRESS AND BY AUSTRIAN OFFICIALS SPEAKING PRIVATELY. OFFICIALS OF BOTH MAJOR PARTIES PREFER TO LET MATTER DIE QUIETLY, HOWEVER, RATHER THAN TO PUT THEMSELVES ON LINE ONE WAY OR OTHER. PEOPLE'S PARTY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS COMMENTED THAT WALLNOEFER HAD NOT CONSULTED THEM, AND CHANCELLOR KREISKY SAID FROM HIS VACATION RETREAT THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO COMMENT ON FRAGMENTARY REPORTS HE HAD HEARD. WALLNOEFER HIMSELF LATER TRIED TO PLAY DOWN MATTER.

3. RELUCTANCE OF NATIONAL LEADERS TO BE COUNTED REFLECTS REALIZATION THAT TOO RESTRAINED POSITION AT NATIONAL LEVEL COULD COST THEM VOTES IN WESTERN AUSTRIA, BUT THAT ANY IRRESPONSIBLE EXPLOITATION OF NATIONAL FEELINGS COULD, AS HISTORY HAS SHOWN, BE DISASTROUS. PEOPLE'S PARTY MAY BE EXPECTED, THEREFORE, TO TRY TO MAINTAIN SAME CAREFUL BALANCE BETWEEN LOCAL MILITANCY AND NATIONAL RESTRAINT THAT APPEARED TO SERVE SOCIALISTS SO WELL IN CARINTHIAN PROVINCIAL ELECTION IN JUNE. AND SOCIALISTS WOULD GAIN LITTLE BY BECOMING INVOLVED SINCE ANY POSITION THEY TOOK WOULD PROBABLY BENEFIT OPPONENTS IN CONSERVATIVE WESTERN AUSTRIA AND THUS NULLIFY HOPES THEY HAVE FOR GAINS THERE TO COMPENSATE FOR LOSS OF SEATS IN THEIR VIENNA STRONGHOLD, WHICH IS TO HAVE THREE SEATS LESS IN NEW PARLIAMENT. MEEHAN

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